policy (some things inside the Beltway actually do work right)
is not a direction we should be working in.

Rex Buddenberg

Support

Kathryn L. Stirk (*stirkk@juno.com*)
Thu, 29 Aug 1996 18:33:45 PST

May we revisit the issue of "support"?

All the equipment and training on using the hardware won't do any good
when the software does something weird. My experience is that software
glitches turn "newbies" off faster than anything else.

My experience also has led me to say with some degree of firmness that
hardware works and software causes headaches!

Please see to it that enough money is included to pay calm, knowledgable
folks to answer the phones and walk everyone through software problems.

-Kate Stirk, Media Specialist
stirkk@juno.com

Buildings/Teachers

Kathryn L. Stirk (*stirkk@juno.com*)
Thu, 29 Aug 1996 18:38:55 PST

Educators try to encourage students to become life long learners. The
most important teacher a child will have is their parent. Parents who
read to a child, send a child to school ready to learn to read. This
will also carry through, that parents who use a computer at home for
information access will teach their child to use the computer and
therefore send the child to school ready to learn more about using the
information highway.

I think the idea of having high speed access as available as electricity,
phone, and water makes sense. How can we encourage private industry to
act like the giant utilities providers but for internet access?

-Kate Stirk, Media Specialist
stirkk@juno.com

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this week's assignments

Bob Carlitz (*bob@info-ren.pitt.edu*)
Thu, 29 Aug 1996 17:25:11 -0400 (EDT)

It's exciting to see the variety of viewpoints expressed so far in
the on-line discussion. While variety and broad range are
welcome, we also have a need to focus on specific issues if we
are going to have any significant impact with regard to the
formulation of policy on Universal Service.

If you have gone through the material labeled "This Week's Activities"
on the Universal Service/Network Democracy home page, you will have
found a list of suggested topics to study, including assignments that
are to be completed as part of this week's work in the seminar. If
you have not had a chance to look at this material, please do so at
        http://info-ren.pitt.edu/universal-service/this-week.html

During this first week I had hoped that all participants would
familiarize themselves with the various steps that the FCC is going
through to implement the Universal Service provisions of the Telecom
Act. The Web site listed above contains an implementation schedule
and a very brief description of what is covered under the Act. It
would probably be a good idea for us to expand upon these issues.

There are two assignments for this week. The first is to read some
of the Comments and Reply Comments that have been placed on-line and
to write summaries of what the commenters have to say in the area
of Universal Service provisions for schools and libraries. There are
over 10,000 pages of material in our On-line Repository, but only
a small fraction of this material deals directly with Universal
Service provisions for schools and libraries. By constructing summaries,
we will develop a valuable resource for people interested in this
aspect of the legislation. This is also an excellent way to learn
what topics have received the most emphasis in previous exchanges on
this topic. Please send your summaries to
        library@info-ren.pitt.edu
so that they can be linked into the Universal Service/Network Democracy
Web site.

The second assignment relates directly to how the seminar will be
structured in the upcoming weeks. To avoid too much of a free-for-all
in the on-line discussions, I hope to be able to provide a subject
focus for each week. I have made some suggestions for topics to cover
in material on the seminar's Web site. Your second assignment is
to post your own suggestions as part of the on-line discussion. I'll
try to pull together the various threads and provide a framework
which is broad enough to cover most of the issues people want to
address but focused enough to allow us to proceed efficiently.

As noted above, there is a lot of material on Universal Service
issues available on-line. I encourage seminar participants to
refer to this material as they develop their own positions on the
issues before us. It's a good idea to try to ground the statements
we make either in the law itself, the FCC's Notice of Proposed Rule
Making and Request for Further Comments or specific issues that have
been raised by commenters in the proceedings. If we proceed in
this fashion, we'll have a solid basis in the legal groundwork that
has been laid on this topic, and we'll be more likely to address
substantial issues that remain to be resolved before the Joint
Board issues its report in November.

I welcome the diversity of opinion that has been expressed so far
in the on-line discussion, and I particularly welcome the energy
and enthusiasm that so many people have brought to the discussion.
Our next task will be to harness this enthusiasm and begin to
focus our attention on the specifics of the law and its implementation.

Bob Carlitz
Moderator

Re: US–ND: Two issues

Marty Tennant (*marty@sccoast.net*)
Thu, 29 Aug 1996 22:43:53 –0700

A careful review of my comments will reveal that I never proposed
that schools try to compete in the provision of Internet Services.

I specifically refered to dial tone and long distance services.

Resale of long distance, as many people are aware, can be highly
profitable. Look at the Telcos. Willing to sell their network
soul so they can do it themselves. Until the FCC issued their rules.

I see a separation between networks and the services provided on them.

The underlying networks are open game for all to resell at a profit.

Services from a variety of sources will be offered on them, maybe some from
schools and libraries.

Would I get my telephone service from my local school in the future,
knowing that I would be putting $3 or $4 every time I pay my bill into what
would hopefully be a long range technology fund? Yes.

Would I give it to the government and expect the same? Maybe, but I'd rather
have local people that I trusted make the decisions on what to do with the money,
with no strings attached.

Schools do fundraising all the time, utilizing incredible energy of students,
parents and teachers. Why not invest your time in something that will have
long term implications? In the case of my Mother's Alumni Assoc., it is run
by the long distance company, not the University or the association.

Schools don't need to turn into businesses. They are community and social
support systems. But any organization can benefit from being run like a
profitable business enterprise. Long term sources of funding, in this day
and age, is good business for education, whatever the source.

On a different subject, don't some schools in the prairie states own farmland
and rent it out to pay for education?

Marty Tennant

Re: If libraries sold books would there be any book stores?

TC Public Library (*tcpublib@traverse.lib.mi.us*)
Thu, 29 Aug 1996 23:18:44 –0400 (EDT)

On Thu, 29 Aug 1996, Robert Mammel wrote:

> If libraries sold books, would there be any book stores?

Absolutely. And the same is true if bookstores loaned books.

> If libraries sell Internet dial in access (become an ISP) will there be any
> commercial Internet Service Providers?

Again, yes. We are a public library offering internet access and there are
six local commercial internet providers serving the same population.

> Commercial Internet access wasn't obviously forthcoming two years ago in
> sparsely populated Northern Michigan, so the local libraries banded
> together to offer dial in service. Two years later only one commercial
> provider has braved competing against the subsidized services offered by
> the libraries.

And I sincerely hope Freeway thrives. It's needed in this part of the
country.

> Once a subsidized service is in place in a marginal profit area, such as in
> rural communities, is it likely that any non-subsidized provider will ever
> brave that market?

I certainly hope so. I like bookstore *and* libraries. I like the choice.

Mike McGuire
Library Director
Community Network Administrator
"Sleep is merely my hobby"

Re: Tech Support and Long Term Funding

Steve Kohn (*NOTES.SKOHN@A50VM1.trg.nynex.COM*)
29 Aug 1996 12:12:12 GMT

```
> I realize this.  But if the discount levels are not on par with the
> discount level for resellers, why go for the Universal Service bait to
> begin with?  As a resale based carrier, you have no restrictions like this.
```

Hi,

```
I envision that the discount levels will be well below the discount level
for resellers.  As stated earlier the real issue is the reimbursement level.
```

```
> As far as technical feasibility, I see school districts, not individual
> schools, as the initiators of this kind of effort.  Their DP resources
> would be needed for billing.
```

```
I can't imagine a school with the capability to do telecommunciation billing
to the home!
```

```
> From a student perspective, if we are suppose to be educating kids for the
> future, what better way for them to learn that by being in the middle of
> the biggest technological shift of the modern age?
```

```
I could not agree more.  Students should be drawn into the use of technology
as much as possible.  They should be using, running and maintaining the systems.
```

```
> From a marketing perspective, you are selling a service that people already
> have installed in their homes.  You are going to charge them the same amount
> they are already paying for dialtone from the incumbent.  They will be aware
> that by getting their service from the school district reseller, they will be
> assisting schools tremendously.  If you throw in long distance resale too,
> the profit picture increases dramatically.  Why do you think the telcos were
> so willing to sell their network soul to get into long distance to begin with?
```

```
> Of course, all profits go into infrastructure, so tax exempt status is
> preserved.
```

```
> One other thing I like about this approach is that is short circuits the
> huge corporations from the equation.  I have numerous real world examples
> of telcos and cable tv companies "efforts" to "help" education.  No thanks!!
> I say this also as a former Bell System employee for many years.
```

```
> As other commentors have said, the Telcos look like they might ignore the whole
> USF issue for schools anyway.  I am seeing cynical interpretations of the law
> like this in my negotiations with the telcos now.
```

```
I'm involved in many Universal Service discussions in DC with various Telcos.
```

I've never heard once that anyone is thinking about ignoring USF. If fact,
we are spending many hours talking with the National Education organizations
to try to work with them to a mutually acceptable definition of US.

> Always best to know your options so you can choose accordingly.

> This is just one way of proceeding. Might not be appropriate for all. Could
> make a lot of sense for some.

> Steve, I realize you work for NYNEX. I don't mean any of this personally, but
> I am increasingly wary of big corporations in this current environment.

I'd be more than willing to discuss this concern of yours offline

Steve

> Marty Tennant
> President
> Low Tech Designs, Inc.
> "Bringing Technology Down to Earth"tm
> "Common Sense Computer and Communications Solutions"tm

Observations

Jan Bolluyt (*jbolluyt@spirit-lake.k12.ia.us*)
Thu, 29 Aug 1996 22:53:45 -0500

- **Messages sorted by:** [date][thread][subject][author]
- **Next message:** Joyce Perkins: "Re: us-nd-digest V1 #10"
- **Previous message:** Steve Kohn: "Re: Tech Support and Long Term Funding"

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29 messages, 45 messages - where is this going! You people are exemplary.
Thanks to Mr. Carlitz for maintaining this.

This e-mail speaks to experiences at Spirit Lake and is too lengthy. It
does not apply to the law, but has implications towards problems, rewards
and expenses involved that someone has to address. If you stop reading now,
no offense is taken!

We tried to provide local access at no profit and developed a base of users
that switched to one of two privates who appreciated the user base that made
their profitability immediate. I don't think that fair trade would ethically
allow us to become service providers if we competed in any way with private
enterprise, and maintaining the system took a very gifted (and hard to find)
computer technician. I believe poorer districts could not afford to
maintain anything more complicated that a cable connection, satellite dish,
fiber optics connection or telephone cabling.

Computers, cabling, and communication connector costs would stifle usage as
much or more than un augmented access. Business/school partnerships could
be greatly enhanced with tax incentives for used equipment from corporations
given directly to schools. This would not deduct from the funding of the
bill, but would allow schools to fund training and other expenses that would
have been directed toward hardware purchases.

We have found that teacher use of Internet access has not been
instantaneous. What has been on the Internet is mainly fluff and sales, but
it is a price worth paying for mainly unlimited browsing. We have to assume
a large responsibility as teachers to·maintain and build worthwhile
databases, forums, curriculum, and helps. This is not a take, take
situation. We need librarians to organize, teachers to build, and companies
to provide an education second-to-none for our students.

Some questions of use came up. We have found;

Weather studies are better on the Internet that with any other medium (a
personal opinion you are welcome to disagree with!. They are immediate,
world wide, comprehensive, and viable in science, math, social studies, k-12.

Testing software off the net before purchase has been valuable. Ethical
questions about share ware and strapped budgets must be addressed.

First rate curriculum is available to save quite a bit of writing time for
teachers and allow them to spend that time on active student needs.

Newsgroups have given valuable personal help, the description of which would
consume too much space:

News and magazines are comparable to hard copy, less expensive (mainly
free), more' current, but not as mobile or complete. Archives of magazines

are becoming available for research with increased numbers of full text
documents. This could really help a library strapped by budget constraints.

Limited library staff in smaller communities thwart consistent monitoring of
patrons. Censorship is a sensitive word, but unsupervised access is, at
least, questionable.

Computer interaction comfortably allows only one person per machine. An
expensive alternative if each student needs simultaneous access.

We have opened our labs before and after school and at night, had volunteer
monitors, and not much malicious damage. This could be part of an answer to
universal access and keep the access within a school building or buildings.

e-mail was the first universally used medium for our teachers:

A technology coordinator, networking specialist, lab monitors, and various
committees became necessary. All of these added to the cost. This from a
school k-12 of 1,200 students.

Teacher training has best worked by soliciting volunteers who learned by
various means, then have them train one or two more and so on. We have
found that training before complete availability has been wasted time and
caused dissention. On the other hand, to have all the equipment around
waiting for teachers to learn and use it has been expensive, also and the
turnover in technology has made us question those purchases.

This forum is a good example of how it can be used, well.

Jan

□ **Next message:** Joyce Perkins: "Re: us-nd-digest V1 #10"
□ **Previous message:** Steve Kohn: "Re: Tech Support and Long Term Funding"

Re: us–nd–digest V1 #10

Joyce Perkins (*jperkins@tenet.edu*)
Fri, 30 Aug 1996 05:31:09 –0500 (CDT)

It is time for me to jump in. After reading the postings, I agree LOW
costs, ACCESS in ALL AREAS, especially rural is essential!! I would like
to think that Internet service could become as economical and ease of
use as the "discount" calculator of today. Let's face it, we all know
the need is there for everyone to have the information on demand. But
the struggles of having it when you want it, and making it as easy to get
to has to be there.

This past weekend I was able to listen to the telecos speak about access.
One company is doing research about using the existing electric utility
lines to piggyback Intenet service. This sounded like a viable plan. I
think the infrastructure is across the US. But I do remember building a
home in a cotton field at the edge of the Texas and New Mexico border and
we had to personally pay for the telephone pole and line to come to our
home. As other neighbors moved in, we were given some rebate on the
initial expense.....turn this to the existing schools and libraries,
couldn't they get rebates or spread the wealth to the poorer districts?

I want the service to be at my fingertips – ON Demand – As easy as going
to my refrigerator to get some ice cubes. Or that pocket calculator that
costs only $2 today that 10 years ago cost $89.99 to pass statistics.

 --- Currie (I think-- or someone also posted the following)
Waiting for the next generatin of college trained teachers is too long to
wait. This legislation needs to manipultated and a way that a signifıcant
sum of money be spent on Training and acceptable uses of this technology.
THIS IS AN AREA WHERE BUSINESS SEEMS TO DO A MUCH BETTER JOB THAN
SCHOOL DISTRICTS. Why????

There must be money designated SPECIFICALLY to pay for SALARY for
trainers of the teachers at the CAMPUS Level. Too many of us as teachers
are spread too thin and are burning out quickly. Those of us with the
knowledge and experience are expected to take our OWN TIME AND MONEY to
train ourselves, then come back and help train our colleague down the
hall. SCHOOLS NEED TRAINING FACILITITES AND A FULL TIME SUPPORT STAFF.
Note that I said Schools, not districts. I don't know of a MacDonald's,
Burger King, Taco Bell, or an AT&T that doesn't have an ongoing training
and support....yet, we have schools with teachers that haven't been given
salary time to learn about the Internet.

See I had to jump in...aren't you glad I got up so early in the morning
to have my say. I do this often, in the middle of the night, is the only
time I can find to surf and enjoy my Internet learning!

Take Care,
Perky

Joyce Perkins   jperkins@tenet.edu
Student Council Sponsor / Business Technology Teacher
Hardin-Jefferson High School   work (409) 287-3565 ext. 22
P. O. Box 639   ** NEW # FAX (409) 287-2558
Sour Lake, TX 77659
"I touch the future, I teach" - Christa McAuliffe, Teacher/Astronaut

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- **Next message:** <u>Hotka, Cathy: "RE: Support"</u>
- **Previous message:** <u>Jan Bolluyt: "Observations"</u>

RE: Support

Hotka, Cathy *(HotkaC@nrf.com)*
Fri, 30 Aug 1996 9:14am

Remember that the concept of universal service is to ensure that everyone
has a base level of connectivity — up until now, that has meant a black
rotary dial phone in the home. Your proposal would increase that level of
support to ensuring that everyone understands how to use any of the various
kinds of software that schools or libraries might install. Are you willing
to see
the open-ended cost of that idea reflected in your home phone bill?

```
> From: Kathryn L. Stirk
> To: hotkac; us-nd
> Subject: Support
> Date: Thursday, August 29, 1996 6:33PM
>
> May we revisit the issue of "support"?
>
> All the equipment and training on using the hardware  won't do any good
> when the software does something weird.  My experience is that software
> glitches turn "newbies" off faster than anything else.
>
> My experience also has led me to say with some degree of firmness that
> hardware works and software causes headaches!
>
> Please see to it that enough money is included to pay calm, knowledgable
> folks to answer the phones and walk everyone through software problems.
>
>  -Kate Stirk, Media Specialist
> stirkk@juno.com
```

Re: this week's assignments

Ronda Hauben (*rh120@columbia.edu*)
Fri, 30 Aug 1996 11:06:58 -0400 (EDT)

I was on vacation in the Netherlands when the mailing list began am now
finally back home so I can participate in the online discussion.

I still need to read through what went on this past week and will
do so as soon as I can.

My comments into the FCC rulemaking in May focused on the need to
open up the process of the rulemaking to a broader set of people,
since those rules would be affecting many more people than have
a way to participate in the standard rulemaking process. I also
pointed to a summary that I had prepared of the NTIA (National
Telecommunications Information Adminstration) online conference
held November 1994 on the issues of universal service and access
(among other issues). That online conference made it possible to have
a broad ranging set of views presented, but then was ignored by
Congress and the Executive Branch when they privatized the NSFnet
and when they drafted the guidelines for the Universal Service
rulesetting in the recent Telecommunications Act legislation.

It is good to see that the FCC has agreed to participate in this
online conference, though I don't yet know what their method of
participation is. And I don't really understand who is sponsoring
the conference and why, as it seems it should be sponsored by
the FCC to have the broadest set of considerations offered toward
their rulesetting process as possible.   .

[Moderator's Note: Please look on the Web site for this sort of
information. I hope it's clearly stated there. Information
Renaissance is sponsoring this activity. Funding is being
supplied by a mix of private and corporate sources. I am continuing
to work to expand the base of this support, which is not meant to
prejudice the content of the seminar toward the viewpoints of any
particular party in the debate. The reason for holding the seminar
is to allow practitioners in the educational applications
of networking technology to have a voice in regulations which
could have a major impact on this field. More broadly, it is
hoped to bring together the educators and librarians with direct
experience with successful applications of the technology, the
business people with knowledge of what new technology is likely
to be available, and the government people who have the task of
implementing the Telecom Act so as to meet its legislative objective.
These objectives involve both open competition and univeral service,
features which occasionally clash in practical application.

As for who is participating, and how, there is a list of registrants on
the Web site, with information on their affiliations and interests. As
mentioned in the Etiquette section of the Web site (under Preliminaries),
each participant is taking part as an individual, not as an official

representative of their organization. In addition to the registered
participants, there are others with "read only" access who may be
monitoring the project's Web site. I have asked people who want to make
contributions to the discussion to register so that everyone can be
here on an equal basis. All of the material presented in the on-line
discussion and on the Universal Service/Network Democracy Web site will
be presented to the FCC as an ex parte submission by Information
Renaissance. This gives the discussion some official status in the
proceedings. More important is the fact that FCC staff are listening
and are interested in what is taking place here. It is our task to
make the discussions coherent enough so as to highlight issues of
major importance to practitioners in the field. If we are able to
do this, the chances that the FCC will draft rules which can adequately
support these practitioners will be significantly increased.]

>It's exciting to see the variety of viewpoints expressed so far in
>the on-line discussion. While variety and broad range are
>welcome, we also have a need to focus on specific issues if we
>are going to have any significant impact with regard to the
>formulation of policy on Universal Service.

There is a need to broaden, not narrow the focus of the online
conference, as there was none of the needed public discussion
before Congress when they drafted the Telecommunications Act of 1996,
and thus to follow a narrow process before identifying the crucial
principles will be to doom the value of what the online process can provide.

[Moderator's Note: Good point, but we can have a broad discussion
which takes up various topics in sequence. If we try talking about
everything at once, the discussion will become noisy and confusing.
I don't want to rule out any topics for the discussion, but I do
want to put together a coherent list of topics and parcel them out
during the time available so that we can concentrate upon each area
in turn. And apologies for such a long-winded note this time. I
really shouldn't make my notes longer than the text they accompany.]

Where To Begin?

Mary Harley Kruter (*mhkruter@patrick.mathernet.com*)
Fri, 30 Aug 1996 11:58:08 –0400

In retrospect, how simple it must have been to develop and implement a
policy of universal service with one clearly defined
service—telephony—delivered by local monopolies! The task at
hand—developing policy and rules for universal telecommunications services
in a yet-to-emerge competitive market of carriers of these yet-to-be
defined "telecommunications services"—is difficult for me to grasp.

I read A.P. Picadio's contribution and the questions posed by the Common
Carrier Bureau for some basic understanding of the law itself and the
issues it raises with respect to rulemaking by the FCC. The issues I
gleaned from the questions the Common Carrier Bureau posed are primarily
those of developing a model for pricing telecommunications services on
which one may define a discount for schools and libraries. Other issues
focused on the rules or circumstances that determine whether or not a
carrier must provide the service and how it will be compensated by the
Universal Service fund.

Before one can grapple with the economic issues of pricing and discounting
a service, it is necessary to define the service. Is there a clear
definition or understanding of exactly what "telecommunications services"
means in the context of our discussion? If not, that's where I suggest we
begin.

Another seminar participant suggested defining telecommuncations services
as a data line in every classroom and library, making it as easy to deal
with as the concept of telephone access was in 1934. Defining
telecommunications service in this singular fashion has merit, but is it
enough to say data line in every classroom and library? Does this mean
wired, wireless, or both? How about voice and video?

Is it possible to define telecommunications services to schools and
libraries as provision of a pipeline (of sufficient capacity) connecting
every classroom and library to information infrastructures? Is it possible
to define sufficient capacity in such a way as to allow for "advances in
telecommunications and information technologies and services" as the law
requires? Is it possible to define this pipeline in such a way that all
carriers—telephone companies or cable companies or whatever company—could
provide the service in order to take advantage of what exists already in a
community, building on that to bring the most cost-effective services to
schools and libraries?

I'd love to "hear" some answers to my questions.

Mary Harley Kruter

E-rate

Carole Teach (*cteach@goldmine.cde.ca.gov*)
Fri, 30 Aug 1996 10:32:03 -0700

I attended the National NetDay Conference on June 29 when Al Gore announced
the education rate or "E-rate" for telecommunications services. I quote,
"basic telecommunications should be an E-rate that is a free rate.
Advanced telecommunications should be low cost. Adequate bandwidth should
be technology neutral with fair, open competition."

I would like to have further discussion and a position about the E-rate?
What would be included under the heading "basic telecommunicatons" vs
advanced telecommunications?

```
Carole Teach                                          Phone:
(916) 654-9662
Manager
K-12 Network Planning                                 FAX:  (916) 657-3707
Research, Evauation and Technology
California Dept. of Education
```

Re: us–nd–digest V1 #10

Ronda Hauben (*rh120@columbia.edu*)
Fri, 30 Aug 1996 13:50:12 –0400 (EDT)

Responding to the post by Joyce Perkins <jperkins@tenet.edu>

>Waiting for the next generatin of college trained teachers is too long to
>wait. This legislation needs to manipultated and a way that a significant
>sum of money be spent on Training and acceptable uses of this technology.
>THIS IS AN AREA WHERE BUSINESS SEEMS TO DO A MUCH BETTER JOB THAN
>SCHOOL DISTRICTS. Why????

The problem with this has been shown on Usenet. Businesses encourage
users to use the Net for all purposes, rather than recognizing the
importance of the Net and the user policies and the importance
of contributing to the Net, not abusing it.

The Internet and Usenet were built over many years by academic
users and others who knew the importance of acceptable use policies
and cooperative efforts. All this past experience is being thrown
out the window, rather than being built on.

Our online book, Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and
the Internet http://www.columbia.edu/~rh120 documents the history
and development of Usenet and the Internet.

This has relied on academic and scientific efforts, and the spread
of the Net, to be successful, must still rely on and encouarge
such efforts. Otherwise we are left with golddiggers trying to abuse
the Net for their own bottom line purposes.

Also, freenet can be helpful in this regard. And libraries can
have training.

There needs to be a public and academic component to future
Net development, not the hype of "business does it all better."

With regard to the development of Usenet and the Internet, that isn't
true, as the history and development thus far demonstrate.

Ronda
rh120@columbia.edu

Re: Where To Begin?

Ronda Hauben (*rh120@columbia.edu*)
Fri, 30 Aug 1996 13:11:03 -0400 (EDT)

- ☐ **Messages sorted by:** [date][thread][subject][author]
- ☐ **Next message:** Ronda Hauben: "RE: Support"
- ☐ **Previous message:** Ronda Hauben: "Re: us-nd-digest V1 #10"
- ☐ **Maybe in reply to:** Mary Harley Kruter: "Where To Begin?"

Responding to the post by Mary Harley Kruter (mhkruter@patrick.mathernet.com)

>In retrospect, how simple it must have been to develop and implement a
>policy of universal service with one clearly defined
>service--telephony--delivered by local monopolies! The task at
>hand--developing policy and rules for universal telecommunications services
>in a yet-to-emerge competitive market of carriers of these yet-to-be
>defined "telecommunications services"--is difficult for me to grasp.

And in fact maybe be an impossible task if that is the way the
issues are phrased.

The issue of universal service has the be the first principle,
regardless of the confusion of the 1996 Telecommunications Act.

The fact that Congress failed to involve the public to define
the issues, and that they took on to radically change the law
without the necessary public input and discussion, means that
that input and discussion have the be first, not trying to
implement their reversal of the commitment to universal service
in the U.S.

(...)

>Before one can grapple with the economic issues of pricing and discounting
>a service, it is necessary to define the service. Is there a clear
>definition or understanding of exactly what "telecommunications services"
>means in the context of our discussion? If not, that's where I suggest we
>begin.

The online ntia conference in November 1994 began to define what
should be considered necessary or a minimal level of access to
the Internet for all. That involved having access to
email, Usenet and some text based browser. The reason is that
the communication aspects of the Internet are the crucial aspects
(irrespective of the hype that the offline media attaches to
so called web based home shopping or 500 channel entertainment)

>Another seminar participant suggested defining telecommuncations services
>as a data line in every classroom and library, making it as easy to deal
>with as the concept of telephone access was in 1934. Defining

But it is important not to see universal access to the Internet
as a question of "data lines". This is an issue involving communication,
not transport issues. To communicate via the computer and the Internet
one needs access to a way to formulate one's post, to store it,
and to send it out onto the Internet. There are similar issues

involved in receiving email and newsgroups.

The federal district court decision in the case challenging the CDA
(also part of the telecommunications act) - defined the Internet
as an important new media that has to be understand and the laws
and rules have to be fashioned to take into account the unique
features of this new media.

That is how the FCC needs to start with regard to providing
universal service to the Internet, rather than with some outmoded
view of seeing this as a bunch of "spegetti" as the talk given
at the Internet Society conference in August in Montreal indicated,
was the case.

Our online book "Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and
the Internet" http://www.columbia.edu/~rh120
documents the unique history and communications potential of this
new media and the FCC officials involved with formulating rules
regarding universal access to this new media would do well
to become familiar with this history and impact, and also to
read through the court decision providing an injunction against
Congress's CDA provisions of the 1996 Telecommunications Act.

(
>telecommunications service in this singular fashion has merit, but is it
>enough to say data line in every classroom and library? Does this mean
>wired, wireless, or both? How about voice and video?

No it doesn't seem to have merit even with regard to text based
communication - as it isn't merely a question of one having
a data line, but of having an adequate computer set up to be
able to participate in online communication.

Voice and video should be seen as secondary at this point, as
establishing principles regarding how to make universal access
to the text based communication available will help establish
the principles for all else, while concentrating on other
aspects will dilute any measure of universal access to communications
potential of the Internet.

The online NTIA conference discussed these issues and the
summaries in chapter 11 and chapter 14 of the Netizens netbook
should be helpful in building on the principles proposed on those
issues.

>Is it possible to define telecommunications services to schools and
>libraries as provision of a pipeline (of sufficient capacity) connecting
>every classroom and library to information infrastructures? Is it possible
>to define sufficient capacity in such a way as to allow for "advances in
>telecommunications and information technologies and services" as the law
>requires?

But if one doesn't focus on the basic level of access to the
communications made possible by the Internet, one ends up with nothing.

The New York City Public Library has installed computers in its
new business and science site. Those computers make it possible
for people to look at what is available online, but don't make
the communications facilities available to all.

Thus one can surf the Net and find video's etc. but one doesn't have
an email mailbox nor a way to read and post to mailing lists or
newsgroups.

This is the danger of what the new telecommunications act will encourage.

Libraries with computers that look like cable tv's rather than as
the communications facilitiating devices that they are.

That is why there is a need to establish the principles of what is
needed, not try to rubber stamp the vague and contradictory
language of the Telecommunications Act passed by the U.S. Congress
which showed so little understanding or concern for making
the new communications capability of the Internet available to all
in the U.S. (as the law provides.)

> Is it possible to define this pipeline in such a way that all
>carriers--telephone companies or cable companies or whatever company--could
>provide the service in order to take advantage of what exists already in a
>community, building on that to bring the most cost-effective services to
>schools and libraries?

But if this is at a high expense to the home user, doesn't this
have to be questioned? The free-nets or community networks provide
access at a minimal cost - to the home user and those in schools,
libraries, etc.

Why then didn't Congress consider the Free-Nets or community networks
as the means of making access available, rather than asking home
users to provide million dollar subsidies to private entities.

Obviously the provisions of the recently passed act were not adequately
considered and thus this seminar needs to explore the broader
means of providing access.

The Free-Nets in Canada estimate that it costs them $8 per user
per year to provide access to email, Usenet, and a text based
browser like lynx. That includes community volunteers who work
with the free-nets to help make this possible.

It seems that this kind of possibility should be explored in this
online discussion as well.

>I'd love to "hear" some answers to my questions.

>Mary Harley Kruter

I've tried to raise some of the questions your questions raise,
and welcome others thoughts on all this.

Ronda Hauben
rh120@columbia.edu

RE: Support

Ronda Hauben (rh120@columbia.edu)
Fri, 30 Aug 1996 13:58:14 –0400 (EDT)

Responding to a post from: "Hotka, Cathy" <HotkaC@nrf.com>

>Remember that the concept of universal service is to ensure that everyone
>has a base level of connectivity –– up until now, that has meant a black
>rotary dial phone in the home. Your proposal would increase that level of
>support to ensuring that everyone understands how to use any of the various
>kinds of software that schools or libraries might install. Are you willing
>to see the open-ended cost of that idea reflected in your home phone bill?

That's why having some policy that means that universal service
means access to the communication that the Net makes possible,
such as access to Usenet, email and text based browsers that
a freenet makes available is a means that can both satisfy the
necessary commitment to universal service and the low cost that
is needed to make this available to all.

Encouraging universities or colleges, and other nonprofit
institutions that might have excess Internet access they
can make available, via some kind of subsidy to nonprofit
institutions, rather than to profit making bottom line
corporate interests, would seem to be more the kind of
policy that should be considered.

In the most recent issue of the Amateur Computerist (a newsletter
we make available online and which I gave to the chief of staff
of the FCC when he left out criteria for universal service to the home
in the talk he gave at INET '96 in Montreal) is available via
email. You can write to ronda@umcc.umich.edu or jrh@umcc.umich.edu
for a copy. The most recent issue included a history of cleveland
freenet, a report on the Telecommunities '95 Conference in Canada
where they raised the challenge of providing access to the Internet
to all by the year 2000, the Access for All FAQ from Germany, etc.

Ronda